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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SOCIETY OF ALUMNI

OF

HANOVER COLLEGE,

JULY 25, 1843.

BY REV. S. RAMSAY WILSON.

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HANOVER, IND. Oct. 7th, 1843.

Rev. S. R. WILSON,

DEAR SIR—The undersigned were appointed a committee at the late meeting of the "SOCIETY OF ALUMNI OF HANOVER COLLEGE," to request of you a copy of your Address, which was delivered before the Society at its last Anniversary.

It is the wish of the members of the Association that your Address should be published, and it is with this view they request of you a copy.

Permit us to assure you that the gratification which we felt in *hearing* your Address, will be greatly increased should you consent to its *Publication*.

Very respectfully,

THOS. W. HYNES,
SAML. B. KEYS,
A. M. JOHNSTON,
} Committee.

CINCINNATI, October 12, 1843.

GENTLEMEN—

Agreeably to the request contained in your communication of the 7th instant, I herewith place at your disposal the Address which I had the honor of delivering before the Society, on whose behalf you act, at its late Anniversary.

With sentiments of sincere esteem,

I remain

Your obedient servant,

S. RAMSAY WILSON.

To THOS. W. HYNES,
SAML. B. KEYS,
A. M. JOHNSTON,
} Committee.

ADDRESS.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Alumni Association:

In coming before you to discharge the duty which you have seen fit to impose upon me, I feel that I might well shrink from the undertaking, and leave its performance to some one more experienced and more competent. But I have attempted the service, for which I am conscious of little qualification, lest to decline should seem an affectation of diffidence. And if my feeble efforts shall be successful, in adding any thing to the rich entertainments of the occasion upon which we are met; or shall conduce in the smallest degree to the attainment of those ends for which our association has been constituted, I shall be abundantly repaid. To accomplish this, I have experienced no little difficulty in fixing upon a subject, the discussion of which might afford at once, both pleasure and instruction. But after revolving one and another, which presented themselves in the wide range of Science—of History—and of Philosophy, speculative and practical, none has seemed to me, better adapted to the time, and place, and circumstances in which we are assembled, than that which I would respectfully propose for your consideration. Allow me then, Gentlemen, to crave your attention to an examination of

THE CAUSES AND INFLUENCE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

Rome, Pagan, had fallen, and Rome, Christian, had succeeded to its wealth and dominion. Imperceptibly, almost, yet with steady advancement, did the simple bishop of a Christian church within the Imperial City, rise to the very summit of spiritual and

temporal power. The causes that combined to bring about this event, were many and various.

The pastors of the Church of Rome, received as a voluntary offering, that tribute of respect which was gratefully presented for their acceptance, by the churches, which, through their instrumentality, had been gathered in the faith of the gospel. Soon, however, they began to claim as a *right*, what at first had been spontaneously yielded. And though it is not unlikely this claim met in the beginning with some opposition, it could have been but feeble. A feeling of dependence—a desire to preserve a union with the capital of the Empire—and a natural indifference to a domination which seemed productive of peace and prosperity, favored the usurpation.

But these encroachments only prepared the way for yet greater. The Roman bishop found his appetite for power, increased by gratification. His "supremacy," says a late historian, "was at first" indeed "limited to the overlooking the churches in the territory lawfully subject to the Prefect of Rome. But the rank which this imperial city held in the world, offered to the ambition of its first pastors, a prospect of wider sway. The consideration which the different Christian bishops enjoyed in the second century, was in proportion to the rank of the city over which they presided. Rome was the greatest, the richest, and the most powerful city in the world. It was the seat of empire, the mother of nations. If Rome be the Queen of Cities, why should not her pastor be the King of bishops? Why should not the Roman church be the mother of Christendom? Why should not all nations be her children, and her authority be the universal law? It was natural for the heart of man to reason thus. Ambitious Rome did so."* And as she reasoned she acted. With unwearied diligence did she labor for the attainment of her desires; and with consummate skill was every thing made to subserve her proud purpose.

The real or nominal conversion of Constantine, tended greatly to accelerate the corruption and to consolidate the power of the Church. His influence brought multitudes into her communion, who were utterly destitute of vital godliness. His favor, added

* D'Aubigné, Vol. 1, pp. 18, 19.

to the honors and emoluments of her ministers; especially of such as occupied the Episcopal chair, in the more wealthy and powerful cities. Of these, three were particularly distinguished, so early as the time of the Nicene Council, as holding an established authority over the Churches of the surrounding provinces. To these patriarchal cities, as they were styled, Constantinople was subsequently added. For a considerable period, Rome held no more than an equal share of power, with these several metropolitan Churches. But Alexandria and Antioch were swept away before the overwhelming hosts of the Prophet of Mecca. Constantinople was severed from its union with the West. And Rome remained alone, to rule the Church without a rival.*

The transfer of the imperial throne to New Rome, also furthered the ambitious designs of the patriarch of the ancient capital; for he was thus freed from that salutary restraint which the presence of the Emperor must necessarily have imposed. The incursions of the barbarians—the misrule of the imperial generals—the multiplied distractions of the times—the growth of ignorance and superstition in the Church itself, all united in laying the foundation of Papal dominion. The pretended successor of the humble fisherman of Galilee, grasped the sceptre as it fell from the hands of the Cæsars, and proclaimed, in the name of "the Prince of the Kings of the earth" his title to the universal homage of the Christian world. "Their temporal power," says Gibbon, "insensibly arose from the calamities of the times; and the Roman bishops who have deluged Europe and Asia with blood, were compelled to reign as the ministers of charity and peace. The Church of Rome was endowed with ample possessions in Italy, Sicily, and the more distant provinces; and her agents, who were commonly sub-deacons, had acquired a civil, and even criminal jurisdiction, over their tenants and husbandmen. The successor of St. Peter administered his patrimony with the temper of a vigilant and moderate landlord. * * The misery of the times, reduced the nobles and matrons of Rome to accept, without a blush, the benevolence of the Church: three thousand virgins received their food and raiment from the

* D'Aubigné, Vol. 1, p. 22.

hand of their benefactor, (Gregory the Great,) and many bishops of Italy escaped from the barbarians to the hospitable threshhold of the Vatican. * * * The misfortunes of Rome involved the apostolic pastor in the business of peace and war; and it might be doubtful to himself, whether piety or ambition prompted him to supply the place of his absent sovereign."*

Thus, by successive steps, did the Roman Pontiff stride to empire. From the time of Gregory, the first of that name, who held the bishopric of Rome, towards the close of the sixth century, down to the period of the Reformation, the same spirit seems to have actuated the conduct of the head of the Western Church—a single aim to have absorbed his energies. That spirit was one of unbounded and insatiable ambition—that aim "to make the Pope an universal monarch." To make Rome, the object of the fear and the hope of every minister of the Church. To bind prince and people to her throne in perpetual servitude. To make "the kingdoms and principalities of the earth" her ample domain. To bring prostrate at her feet, the mightiest kings and emperors of the world.

And so it was. They attained the consummation of their hopes. In their presence, princes trembled. At their hands, kings accepted the royal diadem and obtained from them *leave* to reign. "Woe to those who should resist" their decrees. "Their subjects were released from their oaths of allegiance—their whole country placed under interdict—public worship was to cease—the churches to be closed—the bells mute—the sacraments no longer administered—and the malediction extended even to the dead, to whom, at the command of the proud Pontiff, the earth refused the peace and shelter of the tomb."†

But if the power of Rome had succeeded in crushing the liberty of the gospel; not less had been its success in extinguishing its glorious light. Indeed, the latter may be considered as preceding the former. It was, because the truth of Christ was subverted and trampled under foot, that the freedom it imparts was so completely destroyed.

Cunningly devised fables had usurped the place of the "sure

* Decline and Fall, Vol. iii. pp. 210, 211. † D'Aubigné, Vol. i. pp. 29, 30.

word of prophecy!" The simplicity of spiritual worship, had been succeeded by a monstrous—misshapen mass of superstitious rites and ceremonies. The Bible was hid from man in the darkness of the cloister and the obscurity of an unknown tongue; and in its stead Tradition reared its giant and hideous form. The one only and all-sufficient Mediator, was forgotten; and saints and angels were gifted with his high and holy prerogative. A MAN, received homage, and exercised power, and claimed authority, as God. The world bowed before the 'Queen of Heaven,'—the deified Mother of Jesus. A superstition, worse than Pagan, bound in chains of terror, the hearts of myriads. The most abominable licentiousness polluted the earth: and Sin itself was set to sale that the coffers of the Papal See might be replenished with gold!

Such was the state of the nominally Christian Church, at the opening of the 16th century. A mass of moral putrefaction. A cage of unclean birds. A whited sepulchre, full of corruption and death.

The Truth was lost or buried underneath a vast pile of rubbish that had accumulated for ages, in the shape of decrees of Councils—Pontifical Bulls—or dogmas of Universities and Scholastic divines. The ministers of Christianity had first corrupted the pure and sublime doctrines of grace, by the admixture of human conceits and inventions; and then these corrupted dogmas, misnamed the Catholic Faith, operated by a reflex influence upon the Church and the priesthood, rendering them tenfold more abominable and degraded. "The sufferings and merits of Christ were looked upon," says Myconius, himself a monk and fellow-labourer with the great Reformer, "as an empty tale, or as the fictions of Homer. There was no longer any thought of that faith, by which we are made partakers of the Saviour's righteousness and the inheritance of eternal life. Christ was regarded as a stern Judge, prepared to condemn all who should not have recourse to the intercession of Saints or to the Pope's indulgences. Other intercessors were substituted in His stead. * * These intercessors refused their mediation, unless the party was in good repute with the monastic orders which they had founded. To be so, it was necessary * * * to

perform a number of works invented by the monks and by the priests, and which brought them in large sums of money. It was necessary to chaunt and cry, day and night. There were as many different pilgrimages as there were mountains, forests and valleys".

"But with money these penances might be compounded for. The people therefore brought to the convents and to the priests, money and every thing they possessed that was of any value. * * * Then the chauntings resounded—the bells rang—the odour of incense filled the sanctuary—the sacrifices were offered up—the tables groaned—the glasses circulated—and these pious orgies were terminated by Masses. The bishops no longer appeared in the pulpits, but consecrated priests, monks, churches, chapels, images, books and burial places, and all these brought a large revenue. Bones, arms, feet, were preserved in boxes of silver or gold; they gave them to the faithful to kiss during mass and this increased their gains. All maintained that the Pope being in the place of God could not err; and there were none to contradict them."*

If such was the condition of the body, what may we suppose the head to have been? The concentration of all that is profane or infamous.

Rodrigo Borgia, who occupied the Pontifical chair under the name of Alexander VIth, in the age immediately preceding the Reformation, was the personification of every thing vile and hateful. His character appears more like that of an incarnate demon, than any thing else. Avarice, licentiousness and unprincipled ambition, united in his person and rendered him a monster in human shape. And no wonder that the seat of his dominion, should have presented to mankind a spectacle of unparalleled moral degradation. Rome was the vast and overflowing sewer of moral and political filth and putrescence.

Here then, we have the two most obvious exciting causes of the Reformation: The despotism and the corruption of the Papal Church. These, had both alike grown to such an enormous magnitude, as to be intolerable. A power, claiming unlimited spiritual dominion, had succeeded in binding the inhab-

*D'Aubigné, Vol. i, pp 45, 46.

itants of Europe hand and foot—soul and body. The Man of Sin, holding in his grasp the reins of Conscience, drove kings and princes and people, in proud exultation, before his triumphal car. Beneath the iron heel of Popish usurpation, the spirit of freedom had for centuries been crushed. Before its blighting breath, the flowers and fruits and leaves of the tree of life had withered, and the fountain of living waters was dried up. The political rights of man were trodden in the dust. The hope, and peace, and joy of the Religion of Christ, were unknown to the multitude. A dire superstition cast its fearful shade over every thing fair and lovely on earth! and darkened and obscured every thing glorious in heaven! A midnight of ignorance, the most profound and gloomy, reigned throughout the Christian world. A debased priesthood, led on their blinded devotees, sighing beneath a load of accumulated miseries; while the Spirit of Truth and the Genius of Liberty, turned from the saddening prospect, and prepared to take their flight from the earth.

Men could endure it no longer. They groaned—and shook their chains—and cried for deliverance. Pressed to the earth by the cruel hand of their tyrant, they felt that nothing but his destruction, could secure their safety. Desperate, they began to collect their remaining strength for one last struggle; resolved to crush the destroyer of their bodies and souls, or perish in the attempt.

But there were other causes, that combined to produce that revolution which was fraught with so many and so varied blessings to the human race. Among these, we reckon the revival of letters, which was at once a *cause* and an *effect* of the Reformation. The discovery of the art of printing, by means of which works exposing the corruptions of the Church and the evils of the times, were easily multiplied and generally disseminated. The attempts of Wickliffe—of Jerome and of Huss—with many more, in the age prior to the appearance of Luther, to stem the overwhelming torrent of impiety and oppression, which threatened to sweep every vestige of Christianity from the face of the globe. Attempts, it is true, which were for the time arrested. But the influence of which did not—could not die. The fire they kindled, continued to burn, though for a

while apparently smothered, until it burst forth in that mighty conflagration, which utterly consumed the splendid fabric, upon which Rome had lavished the labor and wealth of ten hundred years.

Nor was this all. In the Church of Rome itself, there yet remained a leaven of truth. Notwithstanding she had added her vain traditions to the Law of Christ, until it was made void and of none effect—she had, perhaps unwittingly, retained in her heterogeneous creed, much of the primitive faith. A germ of the doctrine of God was left; and although it seemed to have lost all vitality and to be entirely decayed, yet whenever the sunshine and dew of heaven fell upon it, it struck its roots downward, and pushing aside every obstruction, sprang up, an exceeding great tree, furnishing food and shelter, to the starving and fainting multitudes, who hastened to refresh themselves, beneath its green and spreading branches.

Thus you have, briefly presented, the various causes, which an All-wise Providence brought to operate for the production of an event, of so great magnitude and importance. The materials were ready prepared, to be cast into the desired mould by the hand of some master workman. Wearied of a servitude, so abject, yet so profitless, the nations clamored for liberty, at least to breathe the air of heaven and walk God's earth unfettered. Prince and people—yes, even numbers of the priesthood—with united voice, demanded reformation.

But who shall dare to undertake the enterprise? What Hercules shall cleanse this Augean Stable, into which the accumulated offal of ten centuries, has been poured? Kings attempted the hopeless task, and failed. The Imperial Henry IVth, strove to break the power of the Pope, but in vain: and he was compelled as a penitent suppliant, to implore at the gates of Canusium, the pity of the haughty Hildebrand, whom he had *presumed* to resist. Men of learning undertook the work; but the shafts of Literature fell harmless at the feet of the enemy, against whose breast they were aimed. Individuals, inspired with a spirit of genuine piety, tried to abate the evil, by lopping here and there a branch from the poisonous tree. But the dungeons of the Inquisition, speedily arrested their career. The

Council of Constance—the representative of the Church—assembled to do the work of Reform. But not all the vast multitude of which it was composed, its Cardinals, arch-bishops and bishops; its eighteen hundred doctors of divinity and priests—the Emperor with his retinue of one thousand persons—the Elector of Saxony—the Elector of Palatine—the Duke of Bavaria, and the Ambassadors of all nations—not all this august host, were competent to the task.

Yet the work must be done. God had so decreed. The course of preparation was completed. The time of Reformation had arrived. The wise—the mighty—the titled dignitaries of the Church, had begun the work; but wearied, they had ceased their labors. They dreaded to touch the tottering fabric of Rome, lest falling, they should be involved in its ruins.

Nevertheless the revolution was commenced. It could not stop. And the agent was at hand, by whom, under God, it should be fully accomplished. Who from the chaos of dissolving forms and elements, should bring forth order and beauty. That agent issued from the Convent of Erfurth, habited in the cloak and cowl of an Augustine monk. That monk was the commanding genius of the Reformation—the immortal—the apostolic Martin Luther. His voice awoke the nations of Europe from their lethargy and brought them to their feet. His arm dealt a deadly blow to the Papal power. His hand scattered far and wide the seeds of Truth and Freedom. And he died, bequeathing to Germany—to Europe—to Mankind, the regenerated gospel and their recovered rights.

Let us now look for a little at the influence which this revolution—the most extraordinary, next to that effected by the Apostles over the heathen world, that the history of man records—has exerted upon the condition and prospects of the nations; particularly of those that were primarily and immediately affected by it.

The Reformation was, beyond all dispute, mainly a religious movement. It was a grand struggle between spiritual light and spiritual darkness—between the eternal principles of Truth and the ever fluctuating, yet unalterably pernicious principles of

Error. It was a conflict for mastery, of the religion of God, and that which had man for its author, with all his corruption and depravity of heart, and with that heart influenced by an unenlightened intellect, and swayed by the power of unhallowed passions and propensities.

Religion—the religion of the Bible—full of purity and love—coming from heaven and speaking directly to man's heart, oppressed by cares and woes and sin, and offering life and immortal happiness, in the name of Jesus, to the hand of faith alone—this was the first, and principal thing that man had lost, and which was the root and source of all his other losses—the bitter fountain, of all the wretchedness, with which his soul and body were deluged. The doctrine of free and gracious justification from sin, by faith—that first truth of gospel salvation—the "*articulis stantis aut cadentis eclesiae*"—that life-giving and peace-bringing principle of the Christian system—had been obscured—swallowed up—rendered utterly nugatory, by the unholy and unsightly appendage, affixed to it by the pride of man, in the form of that earth-born dogma, '*the merit of good works.*' Thus the liberty which Christ confers upon the believing soul was annihilated, and men were entangled with the yoke of a bondage worse than Egyptian—such as neither themselves, nor their fathers, were able to bear. Under its weight their spirits were broken. No longer able freely to aspire to communion with God, men grovelled in the dust of deep and abject degradation. They dared not look upward to heaven, lest they should be riven asunder by its lightning or consumed by its flame. They were tormented with fear of the wrath of Deity—and they turned for protection to an arm of flesh—they put a worm between them and God—and prostrated themselves at his feet, in the miserable servitude of conscience-stricken cowardice.

Was it not necessary then, that the soul of man should be emancipated from this debasing spiritual slavery, before he could walk forth erect upon the earth—with his face toward heaven, as the freedman of the Lord? Surely any reformation which had stopped short of accomplishing this end, must have failed of its mission. Nay—no effort at reform could be of any avail, that did not begin at this very point. The secret of the failure of

those attempts at reformation, antecedent to Luther's time, to which we before alluded, lay in this thing: they endeavored to cure the malady, by drying up a sore here and there, whereas these were but the symptoms of an inward disease, which had infected and was rapidly destroying the vital organs. The head was sick—the heart faint—the poison was in the arterial blood; and useless were mere external and palliative applications, so long as no remedy was found, by which the seat of the disease could be reached.

Luther saw this: or rather he felt it—deeply—painfully felt it. He had toiled, and groaned, and writhed in agony, under this inward disease; and had tried, but to little purpose, the popish nostrums of vigils and fasts—of unmeaning prayers and retirement from the world. He had groped in gloomy darkness, until he was ready to lie down, under the grievous load that oppressed him, and in despair die. But the beams of celestial day had shone in upon his mind—he had found the true Physician—the healing balm of Gilead. A mighty arm had been stretched forth for his deliverance—his burden was taken off—the chains fell from his hands—and he was free. As he looked back upon the dangers from which he had escaped, he was enabled to discover, where lay the strength of his enemy. And beholding multitudes snared in the same toils, from which his feet had been loosed—gasping for breath under the same weight that had bowed him to the dust—ready to expire from the effects of the same deadly poison which had rankled in his veins—he burned with ardent desire, to make known to them, the means by which he had been rescued.

The Reformation was wrought within the soul of Luther, before ever it received an outward form and development. And hence, to a large extent, the life of Luther is a History of the Reformation. It was in the secret and unseen, but fearful conflicts, which passed in the mind of the secluded Monk, that the spirit of the Reformer was begotten and the principles of the Reformation were evolved. Luther learned his own wants, or he had never understood the wants of the people; and he had obtained for those wants an abundant supply, or he could never have sated the desires of hungering and thirsting millions.

Luther was first, himself emancipated from the thraldom of that spiritual domination, which ruled its subjects with an iron rod; and then he was fitted to sound that trumpet blast which announced to the nations the year of release.

The Reformers, amongst whom the monk of Germany stands pre-eminent, did not expend their strength in futile efforts to lop off the excrescences which seemed most to deform the Romish church. God gave them wisdom to see, and boldness to strike at the root of the evil.

It is true, a mere cursory view of their movements, might lead an inattentive observer to conclude that they designed nothing further than the correction of the less tolerable and the more enormous abuses of the ecclesiastical system. But look beneath the surface, and you will discover the glowing fire of newly combined elements, gradually gathering strength, and at length bursting forth with volcanic power—upheaving from their foundations the old, established institutions of religious despotism—consuming the unsubstantial, yet imposing forms of ancient superstitions—but communicating a cheering light and genial warmth to the nations, as it rolled onward over Europe. Yes, to no little degree imparting these principles of life, to those countries and provinces, that madly strove to extinguish the flame it had kindled; and who, so wofully for themselves and the world, succeeded.

The Reformers must necessarily begin somewhere, in their assault upon that huge fabric, whose foundations were so deeply laid in ignorance and custom, and whose walls seemed destined to defy the very power of heaven. Yet we should greatly err in our judgment, were we to confine our attention to any one, or even to all, of their particular movements; which were generally excited by some special circumstance; and were various as the times and places in which they occurred, and the persons by whom they were carried forward.

It is to the fundamental principles, which were laid down by the leading actors in this great movement, as the basis of that movement; and by which, in the main, all their particular actions, necessary to carry on the work in which they had engaged, were guided and controlled, we must constantly revert, if we would rightly determine the present inquiry.

What were those principles? Such as the following: That God alone is Lord of the conscience—Jesus Christ the sole Head of the Church, and the Mediator through whom man can and must come to his Creator. That the Bible is the only rule of faith and duty, by which all human acts and opinions are to be tried. That the church is only the repository of that truth, which God has revealed for man's salvation. That salvation is the free gift of heaven, graciously bestowed through Christ, upon the sinner. That men are justified by faith in the righteousness of Christ, without meritorious works. And that good works are the fruit and evidences of genuine faith.

The simple statement of these principles, as being fundamental with the Reformers—as constituting the broad foundation on which was built their opposition to Rome—as having been recalled to life by their exertions, after being entombed in the sepulchre of human doctrines for so many centuries—might suffice to shew what lasting and incalculable benefit has been conferred by the Protestant Reformation.

Could any thing be more diametrically opposite to the universally received dogmas of Anti-Christian Rome, than the doctrines of Luther and his coadjutors, which have just been mentioned? Or could other principles than these, have maintained a successful struggle with the pretensions of that gigantic power, which reared its head on high and grasped the nations in its arms? We can conceive of none.

Rome heard the announcement of principles, which she had sought to obliterate from the minds and memories of men, with terror and dismay, at the very moment she was gratulating herself in having secured her long cherished aim—when she was saying to herself, "behold I sit as a queen—I shall never know the loss of children nor widow-hood." In that hour, did fingers as of a man's hand, write "TEKEL," in letters of fire, upon her palace walls. A voice from heaven called the people of God to energetic activity in the cause of Truth. Boldly—fearlessly; unmoved by threats—untempted by promises—the band of Christian heroes, asserted man's responsibility to God alone for his opinions—and affirmed the exclusive title of Jesus to the Headship of the Church.

The mystic spell, which Rome had thrown over the nations, was dissolved. Her hold upon the conscience, by which she bound men to her throne, was loosened. The oracles of God, were drawn from the dark oblivion of monkish cells, and the eager multitude read in their own tongues the "wonderful works of God." Men speedily forsook those broken cisterns, from which they had vainly tried to quench their raging thirst; and hasted to drink from the cooling fountain of living waters, which after the lapse of ages and generations, had been unsealed by the ministers of heaven.

Behold, then, the first effect of the Reformation. The Church, emancipated from cruel bondage, is restored in virgin beauty to her Lord. Religion, in all its pristine loveliness, again appears to the enraptured eyes of a wondering world. The priest, stripped of that terrific power, which he had impiously arrogated to himself, is driven from his usurped seat—and men confess their sins to God, in the humble, but joyful confidence of a free pardon. Christ reappears to the terror-stricken heart, an able and sympathizing High Priest and Intercessor; and saints and angels no longer receive the incense of idolatrous adoration. The religion of man's invention, no more shall spread its baleful influence over the soul, blighting its present peace—blasting its hopes of future happiness; for the Religion of God, purged from the dross of centuries—pure and unalloyed as when first it came from the hand of its author, enstamped with his own divine image—has been restored to earth, to enliven—to purify—and to save.

But the restoration of religious truth—the bringing of man back to a knowledge of gospel salvation—the reassertion of those fundamental principles, which must ever constitute the basis of true piety—and the consequent emancipation of men from spiritual thraldom, though the most important of the results produced by the Reformation, are by no means the whole of what it has accomplished. Had the Reformers, indeed, effected nothing more, still would they have been entitled to the lasting gratitude and honor of mankind. For the right apprehension of the will of God, and the way to God, is every thing to an immortal and accountable being. Without this, political prosperity or human knowledge, are of small account. With it, though these should even be wanting, man may and will be happy for eternity.

Yet these advantages, are by no means to be despised. They are in a high degree valuable to man in his present state: and their bearing upon his eternal interests, is perhaps much greater than at first view might appear. Political liberty is a boon that can scarcely be overrated, even though its influences be regarded as terminating with our present existence. And we may rejoice, that the leaders in that Revolution of which we are speaking, placed, in some measure at least, a due estimate upon civil liberty.

Were there opportunity, it would be easy to show, that all the principal Reformers were the unshrinking opposers of political tyranny—the manly asserters of human rights. They were emphatically, *the friends of the commonality*. With one voice, they called for the recognition of the civil, as well as the ecclesiastical immunities of the people.

You may call in question the purity of their motives—you may say they were interested in all this (and I doubt it not); you may charge them with acting the part of demagogues, prating of liberty for the purpose of gaining the popular ear, that thus they might attain their ambitious ends. Yet it alters not a whit the fact, which stands out in legible characters upon the historic page, that the Reformers were the fearless advocates of such measure of civil freedom, as would secure men, against the aggressions of power, and be a safeguard from the despotic sway of tyrannical masters. And he who denies this, is either an ignorant, or wilful slanderer, of some of the best and most heroic men the world ever saw; but for whose resistance to the encroachments of unbridled avarice and ambition, both in church and state, we had this day been crouching as slaves, at the base of some despot's throne; instead of wearing that proud title, which needs no royal patent to render it noble, of AMERICAN FREEMEN.

Yet suppose—if such a supposition is not too absurd to be possible—suppose the Reformers had never opened their lips upon this subject. Suppose they had said not one word, respecting

the relations existing between rulers and their subjects. Suppose they had silently acquiesced—or appeared to acquiesce—in the claim of kings and princes, to the exercise of arbitrary power and to the implicit obedience of the people. Suppose some of them had even taught the doctrine of "passive obedience," in matters pertaining to the civil government; would this have prevented the Reformation, from exerting a favorable influence, upon the progress of human freedom? Far—very far from it. As the avalanche set in motion at the mountain-top, by the foot of some passing traveller, when once started in its headlong career, is beyond the control of him from whom it received its first impulse; but gathering strength as it descends towards the valley below, carries with it, rocks, trees, and habitations of men in its destructive course; so the Reformation once begun, could not be staid in its onward progress. It was not within the power of those who gave to it the first impulse, to control it, as perhaps they might have wished. They could, to a certain extent, guide and govern its movements. They could in some measure, restrain the intemperate zeal of such as would have reduced all things to the confusion of chaos. They did successfully labor to turn the various collateral streams of popular feeling, into one broad and irresistible channel of benignant influence. But it was not given to them, to say to that influence, whether for good or ill, "thus far shalt thou come and no farther."

The effects of the revolution, of which they were the prime movers, were such as it was impossible for them fully to foresee, much less to determine. The probability is, that in the inception of the work, their purposes were at best, but vaguely and illy defined in their own minds. Certain it is, there was no concert amongst them—no combined effort to attain one specified object—no predetermined purpose, declared to the world, as the ultimate end at which they aimed.

We must look then, not at the peculiar opinions of a political nature, expressed by this or that individual leader; nor to the isolated action, of one or another portion, of the main body of those engaged in this contest; if we would ascertain whether in its results, it has been favorable to civil liberty, and operated to

ameliorate the political condition of the Western world. Our eyes should be directed to the fundamental principles, to maintain which, the struggle was carried on; we should consider the general tendency of the whole movement; and carefully examine the actual effects which have followed from it.

Conducting our inquiry in this manner, we are irresistibly led to the conclusion, that whatever evil may for a time have seemed to arise from the action of the Reformers; untold and unnumbered benefits, of a civil character, have resulted to the nations that have felt its influence.

Consider the principles which constituted the broad basis on which the Reformers erected their engines of assault, against the power of Rome; and is it not obvious that no one, adopting those principles and acting in accordance with them, could long be the passive subject of a despot? That no nation, in which they should obtain a firm hold, could long be swayed by the arbitrary will of a single Master? That men, who had been once brought to think, and speak, and act for themselves, in matters of religion; would not be slow to understand, that kings and emperors, are but mortals; and that to abuse their authority, for the oppression of their subjects, is to forfeit the right to reign?

Mark too, another most important fact, confirmed by the universal testimony of those times. The Church and the State were joined, one to the other, in the closest bonds. The Church at first became an *imperium in imperio*. As it increased in numbers and in influence, it defied the authority of the State and successfully resisted its will. At length, the two became so amalgamated and identified with each other, that it was not possible to overthrow the fabric of the Church, without shaking the State to its very centre and involving it, to a great extent, in the common ruin.

The ambitious desire of enlarging their dominions and consolidating their power, had induced the several Princes of the West, to court the favor, by increasing the emoluments of the Roman Pontiffs. It was upon the billows of political strife, that the Popes had risen to empire. They had lent their aid, to one and another of those who successively aspired, during the mid-

dle ages, to the imperial throne of Europe, as best suited their own schemes of aggrandizement; and thus, by degrees, had attained a commanding superiority, over all the governments, into which the continent was then divided.

The restoration therefore, of their ecclesiastical rights to the people, necessarily tended, greatly to promote their civil independence. Overturning the power of the priest, was doing much towards breaking the domination of the prince. Destroying the spiritual tyranny of the Papal Hierarchy, was giving a fatal wound to the uncurbed ambition of Monarchs and Nobles, who in their lust to rule, had been accustomed to tread with unconcern, upon the necks of prostrate multitudes.

Such precisely, was the effect of the Reformation, in a political point of view. Every State in Europe, to which it was admitted, either fully or partially, felt its benign influence, in the ameliorated condition of the lower orders of society and their elevation in the scale of civil and social excellence.

Compare the condition of those countries, in which the doctrines and principles of the Reformers were most readily and cordially embraced and cherished; with those, in which its light was extinguished and its fruit never permitted to come to maturity, and judge of their effects for yourselves. Compare Italy, and Spain, and Portugal; with Germany, and France, and England. I say France—for after all, France owes to the Reformation what liberty she enjoys, and not to that disorganizing and destructive Infidelity, which deluged her land with the blood of her own offspring; as might be shown were this the proper time and place.

And who can believe, if France had received, instead of repelling from her bosom the Reformers and their principles;—if she had nourished and protected her Protestant Sons—the pious and heroic Hugunots—instead of bathing the sword of persecution in their blood and driving them as exiles, to seek refuge in foreign lands—who can believe, the page of history would ever have been blured and blackened by the horrid tale of the "Reign of Terror"—or the fair fields of France, ever become the scene of such a tragedy—or the plains of Europe, been wet with the blood and enriched with the mouldering bones of

slaughtered thousands, marshalled at the nod of that Scourge of Man—the Imperial Corsican?

Again—compare, the so called, republics of South America, with these United States; and then say, if the Reformation was not, in the highest degree promotive of every thing desirable to man, in a civil, as well as a religious respect? For never had this land become what it now is, if it had fallen to the lot of Catholic Spain, as a permanent possession. Never would this Republic have risen up in beauty and majesty, before the eyes of admiring nations, had there been no such reformation from Popery, as was witnessed in the Sixteenth Century. Never had the New World, exhibited to the astonished gaze of the Old, that grand spectacle, which is presented by our beloved land, of a State in which religion—liberty—and law are combined in such harmonious and healthful union, as to promote the happiness and welfare of every—even the humblest citizen—if Luther—and Zuingle—and Calvin—and Knox had not lived—or if their opposition to the usurpation of Rome, had not been eminently favorable to *the rights of Man.*

We next inquire concerning the influence of the Reformation upon the progress of Learning and the Arts.

So far as respects what are denominated the fine arts' especially those of Painting and Sculpture, I shall not contend with any one, who is disposed to doubt, if the *immediate* influence of the Reformation upon them, was favorable to their advancement. Indeed, I am myself inclined to the opinion, it was at first, of an unfriendly character.

Papal Rome, like her Pagan prototype, had become the Patroness of the pencil and the chisel, because of the idolatry which pertained to her system of worship. The introduction of images and pictures into the churches, first as ornaments—next as helps to devotion—and at last as objects of adoration, afforded abundant encouragement to the skill and full scope for the talent of those gifted with a taste and genius for the arts of painting and sculpture.

No wonder then, that for a time, these should seem to decline, when the Reformers had cleansed the sanctuaries of God from

the pollution of lying vanities and with the scourge of divine truth driven idolatry from the house of prayer. No wonder they should even discourage the cultivation of arts, which appeared to be at least the occasion of the most hateful and hurtful practices. Whether, however, the continued progress of Reformation-principles, will ultimately operate to redeem from debasement and exalt to a higher degree of elevation, those arts, by which the rough Marble is moulded to beauty and the dull Canvass rendered animate with the images of lovelines, is a question not yet solved. It remains to be seen, if these arts can flourish in conformity with the simplicity and spirituality of pure Christian worship, under the full blaze of gospel light; or whether they shall cease to be cultivated, as unfavorable to piety—as of little use to mankind—as always pernicious in their tendencies—or as contrary to the express command of the Universal Law-Giver.

Upon Architectural Science, the changes wrought by the Reformers, could at least have no injurious effect. They did nothing—they taught nothing, hostile to the highest attainments in this branch of improvement. Nor is there any reason to believe, their labors operated in any manner, to retard the cultivation of that science and art, which is devoted to the planning and the erection of magnificent Temples and Domes.

But if in reference to painting, sculpture and architecture, the influence of the Reformation be regarded as of a negative character; it is not so with that more elevating—refining—and heavenly science, dedicated to "the harmony of sweet sounds." Music has been used, always and by every nation, in the exercises of religion. Our feelings of joy and gratitude—of sadness and grief—find in poetic strains and measured sounds, their most natural expression. Music, is especially adapted to assist our devotion and suited for rendering praise and adoration to Deity.

Wherever the hearts of men are duly affected by true religion and piety—wherever God is worshiped in spirit and with sincere affection—Music will be cultivated and reach a high degree of perfection.

The Reformation, was a grand revival of the spirit and practice

of genuine piety, and it could not fail, to exert upon Musical Science a purifying and ennobling influence. The Reformers too, were men of cultivated minds and of refined tastes. They were men, who had hearts tenderly sensible to every generous impression; and understandings capable of appreciating the beautiful—the lovely—the truly admirable productions of genius. They themselves loved music and cultivated it. The compositions of Luther, which have come down to our times, prove that he at least, aimed to further the practice of this most pleasing art. Nor can better pieces of sacred music be found, than some of those that bear the impress of his great mind. There is in them a solidity—a solemnity—a majesty—an adaptedness to divine worship, rarely met with in modern productions. And no doubt many of them will be sung with emotions of delight, so long as there are hearts to feel or lips to express, sentiments of thankfulness and devout adoration, to the Majesty of Heaven.

Upon the progress of Learning, the Protestant Reformation exerted an influence which it is hardly possible to estimate or to describe. It gave a new impulse to every department of knowledge. It awakened the human mind, from that death-like stupor into which it was sunk. It broke up those ancient modes of thought, in which men had so long cramped and stultified their intellectual powers. It brought to light the repositories of ancient lore, which lay concealed beneath the accumulated dust of ages. It opened up the fountains of learning; and invited the nations to come and drink full draughts from their refreshing waters. It delved deep and large the channels of useful knowledge and polite literature; and poured forth fertilizing streams upon the parched and desert earth. It set men to search after first-principles, long lost and buried under the drifted sands of crude and profitless speculations. It denied the slavish and besotting dogma of blind and implicit faith;—called upon men to prove all things—to seek for truth as for hid treasure—and taught them to think, to reason and to judge, without dread of the harmless anathemas, hurled from the palace of the Vatican. It brought mind into conflict with mind; and light was stricken out in the concussion—as the spark is drawn from the flint, when brought in contact with the steel. It told men

to investigate—to examine—to act for themselves. It put the Bible into the hands of enslaved millions, and pointing upward, told them to read and study its contents; and as they read and studied, to seek from heaven wisdom and understanding. It put a perpetual end, to the vain babblings of the schoolmen—exposed the old wives' fables of dotard monks—turned men from their vain janglings—and instructed them in the love and the pursuit of sound philosophy—elegant learning—and practical knowledge.

The Reformers themselves, were ardently attached to the study of Learning and Philosophy. They were not satisfied to skim over the surface, in superficial haste; but with a freedom untrammelled by fear of imaginary dangers, searched out those hidden depths, which Rome had persuaded mankind it was fatal to explore.

Many of them were giants in intellect, and their faculties were cultivated to the very highest degree. They drew wealth from the richest mines of classic literature, and neglected no means within their reach, of adding to their acquirements. And there are many subjects, of which they have treated with far more ability, than was ever done before or since. Subjects too, requiring the most extended research—the clearest discrimination—the soundest judgment—and the most intimate acquaintance with correct principles of Philosophy.

The German of Luther is a model of purity—his translation of the Scriptures is a lasting monument of his intellectual greatness; as it is of the piety and benevolence of his heart. And the thousands who attended upon his Lectures, were witnesses of the strength of his genius and the cultivation of his mind. Melancthon, as unrivalled in learning, as he was unsurpassed in meekness and amiability of temper, did more perhaps, than any other man of his age, towards the restoration of classical literature. Luther used to style him, "his most learned and amiable Grecian." "Melancthon's appearance, wrought a revolution, not merely in Wittemberg, but throughout Germany and the learned world. The study he had applied to the Greek and Latin classics, and to Philosophy, had given an order, clearness and precision to his ideas, which diffused on the subjects he handled, a new light and an indescribable beauty. The sweet spirit of the gospel, fertilized and animated all his reflections; and in his lectures, the driest sciences appeared clothed with a grace that charmed all hearers. The sterility that the scholastic philosophy had spread over instruction, was gone; a new method of teaching and of study was introduced by Melancthon. Thanks to him, Wittemberg became the school of the nation."*

Calvin was scarcely less versed in all learning than the 'Grecian Philip.' He stood pre-eminent as a Scholar and Divine, amongst the many scholars who adorned that age of great men. His Theological Institutes, composed in Latin not unworthy the Augustine age, were speedily translated into almost all the languages of Europe; and were adopted as a text book in divinity, in many of the most distinguished Universities. And his Commentaries upon the Scriptures, particularly on Isaiah and the New Testament, have not been, and cannot easily be excelled.

If such was the character of the leading spirits of the Reformation. If they so ardently loved knowledge—so fully appreciated its value and importance—and labored with such untiring perseverance for its attainment. If the object of their self-denying endeavors, was to loosen the bands of a debasing thraldom from the souls of men—and to disseminate the light of truth amongst vast multitudes, upon whom the deadly shades of Mental and Moral darkness had settled. If they preached, and lectured, and disputed, and wrote, for the purpose of communicating instruction to the ignorant—of breaking up the fountains of thought and feeling in the soul—of lifting the veil which Rome had cast over the face of the nations—and of destroying the dominion of a priesthood, that ruled by craft, and made gain of the blinded and deluded people. If, in a word, they restored the key of knowledge, of which men had been robbed by the cunning and the power of the Pope; and gave to the nations in their own vernacular tongues, the oracles of God: If the Reformers did all this, who can doubt—who will deny—that the result of their zeal and devotion—their pains, and toils, and

*D'Aubigné, Vol. i. pp. 332, 333.

sufferings—has been incalculably beneficial to human society, as regards its advancement in knowledge?

But our time is exhausted, and I fear also, your patience. Here, our consideration of this interesting theme, must close. The time has come when no one can safely be ignorant of the influences of that revolution, which constitutes so memorable an era in the world's history. For there are those in our midst, who would insinuate, that the Reformers were mad, fanatical, ambitious destructives, that sought to rule, though in the midst of ruin. Who would verily persuade the descendants of the Pilgrims and the Huguenots, the Reformation was a curse. Who would have us believe, that Protestantism has failed of its Mission; though its principles form the broad base of our Freedom, and our beloved institutions are its offspring. Who would teach the Sons of the Puritans, that the only hope of securing the perpetual peace, happiness and prosperity of this United Republic, is to banish the Bible from our hearths—repudiate the doctrines of the Reformation—heap scorn, contempt, abuse, upon those names we have been wont to honor, as expressive of all that is noble or philanthropic—and with an implicit faith, that presumes not to inquire, rush into the arms of Mother Church, and submit in humble obedience, to the infallible mandates of the High Priest of Rome.

Shall it be so? What say you, ye Sons of Columbia, through whose veins courses the free blood of Saxon Sires—what say you, are ye prepared for this? If so—go dastard like and cringe and lick the dust, at the feet of the titled minions of base Italy's lord.

But no! it cannot be—your generous hearts repel, indignant, the very thought. And right sure I am it will never be, if faithful to the trust bequeathed us by our Patriot Fathers, you study the history—understand the influence—and with unshrinking courage maintain the heaven-born principles of the Protestant Reformation. For of that Reformation it may be truly said, it restored the truth of God to man—rekindled the expiring spark of Freedom in the bosom of the nations—and to it we owe, whatever of light or liberty we possess.

Brethren of the Alumni Association,

It is with feelings of no ordinary character, I have appeared before you upon the present occasion. Time, in his never ceasing progress, has measured out seven long years since I bade adieu to the halls of our Alma Mater, consecrated by so many hallowed associations. Well do I remember, how can I ever forget whilst memory retains its power, the mingled emotions with which I turned away from the scenes of my college days; and looking for the last time, upon the spot where I had been wont to listen to the instructions of men, gifted with knowledge and experience, entered upon the voyage of life, to sail o'er unknown and untried seas. What those emotions were—how mingled feelings of pleasure and sadness—of regret and fearful anticipation, tumultuously struggled within my breast, I need not attempt to describe. Were it possible, it were useless. For you yourselves have felt the same, as in successive bands, with each revolving year, you have left this peaceful spot and girded yourselves for the wild conflict of public life.

I doubt not, that in the varied scenes through which you have one and all been called to pass—no matter how far removed from the place on which we now stand—your thoughts have often winged their way hither, and with delight hovered about your once loved ALMA. In imagination you have lived over again your College days. You have seen those friends, whose greetings, as from term to term you again returned to resume your studies, after a brief period of vacation, served to dissipate the sadness with which you had left the paternal roof. You have heard once more, the well-known sound of the "College Bell," calling to morning and evening prayers, or telling that the hour of recitation had come. Once more have you tried, with palpitating heart, to conjugate the Latin "*Amo*;" or the more rugged and less attractive "τύπτω" of Greek. Or with trembling hand, you have endeavored to trace, in chalky lines, upon the face of the terrific "*black-board*," the diagrams and hieroglyphs of stern Geometry. Again, for a little, freed from the terrors of the recitation room, you have joined in the joyous crowd of your fellow-students, and rent the air with shouts of harmless merriment; and then, anon, with a bosom friend, your chosen "*chum*,"

you have wandered with light-hearted steps, amidst the wild scenery of Butler's, Hearts', or Clifty Falls, listening to the sweet and soothing melody of their murmuring waters.

Thus in memory and imagination, have you oft lived o'er again, those hours of pleasure; whilst as yet your hearts had not been smitten by the blight of the world, nor had raven-winged care ever cast his cold shade upon your soul.

But those hours and days, of sunshine and of joy, are past—are gone—are fled forever. Indelibly enstamped are their impressions upon the heart, and imagination may recall them with vivid clearness from the darkness of oblivion. But no power of man can again make them realities. They are numbered amongst the things beyond the flood. This first act in the drama of our existence is finished. It cannot be repeated. Its follies may never be corrected—its delights can no more be enjoyed. We are called to perform other parts, upon the theatre of the world. And though we may remember, we shall never take part in scenes that are past.

Who of you, my brothers, that does not to-day most deeply feel this saddening truth? Whose heart does not heave with emotion, too big for utterance, as the multiplied evidences of this fact rush upon his soul? Who does not feel a heavy weight of sorrow press upon his heart, as he now realizes, for the first time perhaps, what he once had little dreamed, that we may return to the spot where boyhood and youth have been joyously spent in quietness and peace, but to bring back to that spot the same scenes—the same friends—is beyond our power? We are changed—this place has changed. The friends, whose acquaintance we so much prized and at whose firesides we were ever wont to meet a cordial welcome; where are they? Our fellow-students—our intimate associates—our class-mates—are gone—are scattered!

Some have passed from the scenes of earth, to try the realities of that "country from whose bourne no traveller returns." The lamented Conover, burning with holy ardor to bear to distant lands the light of truth and liberty, fell beneath the inexorable hand of death, ere his footsteps passed the threshhold of his Alma Mater. The pious—the benevolent Schillinger, whose

kind-heartedness none who knew him will ever forget, lies buried in a Southern land—his spirit now with God. And the bold, the generous Baxter, ambitious of fame, fearlessly sought it in an uncongenial clime, and found a grave!

"Oh! had it been but told you, then,
"To mark whose lamp was dim,
"From out yon rank of fresh-lipped men,
"Would ye have singled him?"

But most of those who were our associates here, though scattered far and wide, still live. And they live—thank God! with but few—very few exceptions—as ornaments of society—an honor to Hanover College.

But if so great a change has taken place amongst those who were our fellows and companions, not less has been the change with respect to those, from whose lips we were once accustomed, to receive the lessons of wisdom. They too—whom we remember with feelings of deepest respect, as our instructors and our friends—are gone—are scattered. Death has been doing his fearful work amongst them also. For the grass has scarce yet grown over the grave of him, who a few days ago presided in these Halls. The tears are hardly dry upon the cheeks of those who wept over the funeral-pall of the lamented Blythe. Consecrated be his memory in every heart! Many—many of those who once listened to his voice within these walls, shall rise up and call him blessed. Aged—venerable man! Thou hast gone to thy reward! We mourn thy loss—but to thee unspeakable gain! May thy ashes rest in peace, until the resurrection morn shall recall them to life and immortality!

Yet, though time has laid his withering hand upon many things of which the remembrance is so pleasing—though our Alma has not escaped his rapacity—though some of those who sat in these seats beside us, are lying in the cold and silent tomb—we are here to-day again to look upon each others faces. We are permitted, once more to join in hearty greetings, in this place, around which cluster so many grateful recollections. We are returned to the hearth of our common Mother, by whose hand we were nurtured in the knowledge and the love of truth, to unite in the festivities of another Annual Commencement.

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And right glad am I to be here—to meet so many of those with whom I can claim a maternal kindred so sacred and endearing. Hail! sons of Hanover College. Brethren Alumni, I greet ye! May the dew of heaven's blessing, ever refresh your hearts! May the scorching sun of adversity never blast your prospects! May the golden bonds of a common brotherhood unite us to each other, though the place of our habitation be sundered by rivers, and states, and seas, and continents! May our meetings upon this spot be oft repeated, and ever marked by harmony and good feeling! May we always be found on the side of heavenly truth and human rights! May the principles of those men, of whom I have attempted to speak, govern all our efforts for the good of our country and of the world! May we each, in our several spheres, be enabled to emulate their magnanimous deeds! And whatever sacrifice it cost, may every Alumnus of Hanover College, be found ready to maintain and defend that Reformation, which was, and is, pre-eminently, "THE CAUSE OF MAN!"

NOTE. Since the foregoing address was delivered, the author has had an opportunity of reading the very able and eloquent Essay of C. F. DOMINIC DE VILLERS, sometime Professor of Philosophy in the University of Gottingen, on "The Spirit and Influence of the Reformation." This Essay received the prize from the National Institute of France, and is so calm, comprehensive and conclusive a view of the subject, as it relates to the Political affairs of Europe and the Progress of knowledge, that I cannot forbear commending it to the attentive perusal of every one who has any doubt, either of the necessity of the Reformation, or of its benign influence upon the world.

Would it not be doing a lasting service to the community, were some of our enterprizing publishers, to issue a cheap edition of the English translation of this interesting and valuable work?